

Education in the U.S. and U.S.S.R.

An Intimate Message from Washington

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By Richard L. Stross

One of the big questions of the day is whether, and how far, the government should intervene in private enterprises and the free economy to maintain competition with Soviet Russia. A case in point is education.

Congress left Washington without passing an education bill and will take it up again in August. How far should Washington increase taxes, if at all, to improve American schools? The question can hardly be asked without glancing at the Soviets.

According to Nicholas DeWitt of the Russian Research Center at Harvard, the Soviets spend seven per cent of their Gross National Product on education, or twice the percentage of the United States. The result is that the actual amount spent by the two nations is about the same. Mr. DeWitt says, "A country which is less than half as rich as we spends as much on education as we do."

Mr. DeWitt's comments are contained in two articles, the current issues of the "Harvard Educational Review," and of "School and Society."

Last fall the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Allen W. Dulles, told Congress that the Soviets are diverting their limited but expanding product into heavy industry and defense manufacture with a result that they are producing about as much as the United States in these fields. What Mr. DeWitt now says is that the Soviets are doing the same thing in education, in the fields of mathematics, natural science, engineering, and teacher training. In each case the Soviets are financially aided by an economic growth rate about twice that of America.

Here are Mr. DeWitt's figures on engineer graduates.

The Soviets now have a reserve manpower of professional engineer graduates of 974,000, or one-third larger than the United States. The Soviets have a projected annual increase of 123,000 in the next five years. This would be 300 per cent larger than the United States.

Mr. DeWitt offers similar comparisons in the health and medical fields—the So-

viets are one-fourth larger in present with annual increment of at least per cent larger than America's.

On the other hand, the United States is graduating twice as many from its colleges as the Soviets. Mr. DeWitt says, and three times as many in the cultural and economic fields.

How reliable are these Soviet statistics? In testimony to Congress, Mr. Dulles warned against Soviet exaggeration and boasting. Yet after due allowance he declared that best information places the Soviet economic growth at about twice America's. In the practical field of results, of course, the Soviet launching of the Sputniks was an impressive feat and their payloads are still to be equaled by the United States.

Dr. Alvin C. Eurich, vice-president and director of the Ford Foundation for the Advancement of Education, stressed the high pay and distinction accorded Soviet teachers in an article published in "Harvard Today," February, 1954. Dr. Eurich traveled extensively in Russia. He found rigorous scholastic standards and the development of a scientific elite.

During the 9th and 10th grades (ages 16 and 17), Dr. Eurich reported, the predicated schedule for students was a "12-hour day, six days a week, for 10 months of the year."

Soviet respect for professors is expressed in salaries. Dr. Eurich reported. In the top category of "academician" the teacher starts with a base pay of 5,000 rubles a month for life, plus other advantages bringing a total annual income "in the range of \$25,000 to \$40,000 at the official rate of exchange." In addition he gets concessions on rent and travel, free medical expenses, and free education for his children up to and through the university. His social position is high.

Dr. Eurich commented: "To me the accomplishments in the field of education which Russia has made in a relatively short time are much more frightening than announcements that come from Russia concerning atomic or hydrogen bombs or guided missiles."